

# Inspection of St Robert's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy

Ainsty Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 4AP

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Jill Collins. This school is part of the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Darren Beardsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Diane Gaskin.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Robert's Catholic Primary School is a welcoming, inclusive and diverse community. Teachers and support staff care passionately about each child. They take a keen interest in pupils' ideas and opinions. Everyone is valued. The Catholic values of the school are a central feature of its work. These values are reflected in the acts of kindness that pupils carry out in the school and in the community.

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), say that they feel safe. This is, in part, due to the diligent work of leaders and staff at the school. When safeguarding or pastoral concerns arise, staff deal with issues swiftly and sensitively.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school during playtime. Occasionally, there are instances when a minority of pupils forget their manners or disrupt the learning of others. Nevertheless, pupils are resilient and forgiving. Teachers have high expectations. They insist on using positive praise to help find the best in each child.

Children in the early years are happy. There is a lively atmosphere in Reception class, where children make friends and play well together. However, children do not get off to the best start. In recent years, a large proportion of children have not developed the literacy, communication and language skills needed to make them ready for Year 1.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Reading is given a high priority. Pupils talk eagerly about their favourite books, including 'The Iron Man' by Ted Hughes and 'The Egyptian Cinderella' by Shirley Climo. Teachers read regularly to pupils. They bring stories to life by using expression and interesting voices to grab pupils' attention. The school's recent approach to teaching early reading is helping more pupils to read fluently. All staff teach phonics in a consistent way, using similar language and routines to teach letter-sound correspondences and how to blend them. The books pupils read include words that align with their phonics knowledge. Staff have a firm grasp of where pupils are at in respect of their phonic development. However, there are some occasions when the organisation of teaching, and groups, leads to some pupils with weaker phonics knowledge being expected to learn the same sounds as their classmates. As a result, these pupils do not keep up with the school's phonics programme as well as they might.

The school's curriculum is increasingly ambitious. The school gives careful thought to the order in which pupils learn the curriculum and the resources used to deepen their knowledge. Pupils are given time to rehearse, and reflect on, what has been learned in most subjects, particularly in mathematics. Here, pupils use regular recaps, and effective representations, to make connections between important concepts such as multiples and equivalent fractions.

The proportion of pupils at the school who speak English as an additional language is increasing considerably. Some pupils have been out of education prior to joining the school. New starters quickly integrate. They receive sensitive support from adults and a helping hand from prospective friends. The frequent smiles and giggles echoing along the corridor and in the playground demonstrate how successful the school is at making pupils feel at home. While these pupils quickly settle into school, actions to help them learn to read fluently, or to express their own feelings, are less developed.

Leaders from the school and the multi-academy trust (the trust) work well together. The trust uses clear systems to evaluate the quality of education pupils receive. This information is used effectively by the trust to initiate support and challenge in the right places. For example, more recently, trust staff have been supporting new initiatives in the early years. Staff say that school and trust leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Early career teachers receive strong support and make excellent progress.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority. Pupils enjoy the many leadership opportunities in the school, including being reading ambassadors and 'Mini Vinnies' (members of the St Vincent de Paul Society). Assemblies, singing and prayers help to embed and promote the school's golden rules of 'Be ready, be safe and be respectful'. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their character and stay active during the day, during scheduled festivals and events. Some parents and pupils would like to see further opportunities for more extra-curricular activities, which are limited currently.

Children's learning in the early years is not as strong as it could be. Expectations of what children are capable of are too low. Opportunities for meaningful learning are not well planned, particularly for literacy, communication and language. The school has recently introduced a new approach which is helping more children, especially boys, write words in ways that match their spoken sounds. It is too early to see if this is helping more children to be ready for their next stage in learning.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Provision in the early years requires improvement. Deliberate, well-planned opportunities for pupils to speak, listen and write are sporadic or do not challenge children as well as they might. In recent years, not enough children have been ready for their next stage in learning. The school should ensure that the curriculum in the early years is ambitious and implemented in a consistent and

effective way, so that more children reach the expected standard and are ready for their next stage in learning.

- Some pupils, at an earlier stage of learning to read, are taught letter sounds that are too difficult. Occasionally, these pupils struggle to access the lesson or complete activities with success. This is not a good use of their time and can have a detrimental effect on pupils' confidence when reading. The school should ensure that lessons are pitched appropriately to better meet the needs of pupils learning to read.
- The school is at an early stage in its thinking about how to best support the increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school should ensure that it has an effective strategy to support the induction of these pupils, helping each new starter get off to a flying start.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148381
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242456
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	302
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Diane Gaskin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jill Collins
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.strobertsprimaryschool.co.uk/">www.strobertsprimaryschool.co.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust in March 2021. There are 13 schools in the multi-academy trust, comprising two secondary schools and 11 primary schools.
- The school is a Roman Catholic voluntary academy. The school's denominational education and collective worship is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The school was last inspected under section 48 by the Diocese of Leeds in April 2019.
- St Robert's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy school in March 2021. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2009, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The pupil cohort in the school has changed significantly over the last two years. An increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language have been admitted to the school. There are 28 languages spoken by pupils.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met a range of school and trust staff including the headteacher, senior leaders, early career teachers, subject leaders, support staff, the chief executive officer of the trust, senior trust staff and trustees as well as members of the academy council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central register; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects. Additionally, inspectors listened to pupils read, met a group of pupils with SEND, talked to parents at the start and end of the school day, met with pupil leaders and reviewed pupils' work in music, design and technology, and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors took into account the 76 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Twenty-three members of staff and 94 pupils completed Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

### **Inspection team**

Lee Elliott, lead inspector	Senior His Majesty's Inspector
Emmeline Ford	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Oddy	Ofsted Inspector

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